

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 03839 270252Z
ACTION EA-12

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-----002275 270254Z /70
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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9614
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EWWT, TH
SUBJ: MEBA COMPLAINT ABOUT THAI CUSTOMS

REF: STATE 068083

1. CONGEN CONFIRMS SITUATION MENTIONED REFTEL. WE WERE FIRST MADE AWARE OF IT APPROXIMATELY YEAR AGO WHEN BOSUN OF SS PONCE, SEA-LAND SHUTTLE SHIP, CALLED AT CONGEN TO PROTEST ON BEHALF OF UNLICENSED MEMBERS CREW OVER THE ACTIONS OF THIA CUSTOMS AT BANGKOK. IN RESPONSE CONOFF WROTE EMBASSY BANGKOK REQUESTING THAT EMBASSY LOOK INTO MATTER.

2. ON AUGUST 25, 1977, CAPTAIN MARKRIS, MASTER, SS GATEWAY CITY, ANOTHER SEA-LAND SHUTTLE SHIP CALLING BANGKOK, OFFICIALLY COMPAINED TO CONGEN AND REQUESTED THAT BANGKOK CONOFF ATTEND VESSEL UPON HER ARRIVAL SEPTEMBER 2 TO HEAR COMPLAINTS ABOUT THA CUSTOMS OFFICERS. 77 HONG KONG 10280 WAS SENT BANGKOK RELAYING REQUEST. CONSULAR OFFICER DID ATTEND VESSEL, BOARDING DOWN RIVER AND RODE VESSEL TO BANGKOK TO MONITOR CUSTOMS PROCEDURES, WHILE PROCEEDING UP RIVER AND AFTER ARRIVAL BANGKOK.

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3. CONOFF HONG KONG VISITED BANGKOK EARLY DECEMBER 1977 AND DISCUSSED MATTER WITH CONOFF THERE WHO OUTLINED REPRESENTATIONS EMBASSY BANGKOK HAD MADE TO THAI AUTHORITIES CONCERNED. THESE HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE, AS VARIOUS CREW MEMBERS OF THE SEVERAL SEA-LAND VESSELS CALLING BANGKOK HAVE TOLD CONSULAR OFFICER HONG KONG THAT SITUATION HAS IMPROVED. MASTERS OF

VESSELS CONCERNED HAVE CORROBORATED IMPROVEMENT.
WE BELIEVE THIS TO BE THE CASE AS CONGEN HAS NOT
RECEIVED ANY COMPLAINT SUBSEQUENT TO THAT OF CAPTAIN
MARKRIS MENTIONED PARA 2.

4. SEA-LAND AUTHORITIES IN HONG KONG AND BANGKOK
HAVE ADOPTED A MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD COMPLAINTS,
LARGELY AS RESULT OF CONGEN AND EMBASSY REPRESENTATIONS
COUPLED WITH COMPLAINTS FROM OFFICERS AND MEN OF
SHIPS CONCERNED. IN ADDITION, SEA-LAND HAS FIXED
THE AMOUNT OF GRATUITY TO BE GIVEN TO CUSTOMS OFFICIALS
WHICH CONSISTS OF A FIXED AMOUNT OF CARTONS OF
CIGARETTES ONLY AND MASTERS ARE UNDER INSTRUCTION
NOT TO GIVE ANYTHING MORE, BE IT ADDITIONAL CIGARETTES,
FOODSTUFFS, OR ITEMS FROM THE SLOP CHEST. MASTERS
ARE ALSO UNDER INSTRUCTION IMMEDIATELY TO BRING TO
ATTENTION EMBASSY BANGKOK DEMANDS FOR ADDITIONAL
GRATUITIES OR EVIDENCE THAT THE REFUSAL OF SAME IS
RESULTING IN DELAYING THE VESSEL'S SAILING. ACCORDING
TO SEA-LAND OFFICIALS HONG KONG, THEY ARE OF OPINION
MEASURES TAKEN BY THEM AND EMBASSY BANGKOK HAVE
RESULTED IN THE IMPROVEMENTS NOTED THIS TELEGRAM.
SHOESMITH

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